

**RAINBOW DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**  
**REGULAR BOARD MEETING**

to be held electronically via Google Meet  
in the Ernie Checkeris Boardroom  
at the Centre for Education, 408 Wembley Drive  
on Tuesday, September 1, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.

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<b>AGENDA AND RECOMMENDED MOTIONS</b>
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**A. APPROVAL OF AGENDA \*Chair**

Motion:

That the agenda for the Regular Board meeting of September 1, 2020 be approved.

**STUDENT TRUSTEE**

Motion:

That Ava Lafrance (Confederation Secondary School) be appointed Student Trustee for the school year 2020-2021.

Declaration of Office and Oath of Allegiance.

**B. PRELIMINARY DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST \*Chair**

**C. PRESENTATIONS \*Chair**

Outgoing Student Trustee Colleen Gauvreau

**D. REPORT FROM THE IN-CAMERA COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING OF THE BOARD \*Director**

**E. OLD BUSINESS \*Director**

**1. Previous Minutes \*Chair**

Motion:

That the minutes of the Regular Board Meeting held on Tuesday, August 18, 2020 be approved.

**2. Tenders/Requests for Proposals NIL \*SBO**

**3. Deferred Motion from the August 18, 2020 Board Meeting**

Motion:

Be it resolved that all students K-12 in Rainbow Schools wear masks at school.

4. **2019-2020 Live Stream Report** \*SBO
5. **Reports and Recommendations from Board Committees** NIL \*Chair
6. **September School Reopening Update** \*Director
- F. **NEW BUSINESS** \*Chair
1. **2019-2020 COVID-19 Expense Report** \*SBO
2. **Lasalle Secondary School Project Update** \*SBO
3. **OPSBA Fees** \*Chair

Motion:

That the 2020/21 membership fees in the Ontario Public School Boards' Association be approved.

4. **Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) Annual General Meeting (AGM)** \*Chair

Motion:

That the Board approve the attendance of the following trustees at the OPSBA AGM via video conference September 26, 2020:

5. **Requests for Leave of Absence** \*Chair

Motion:

That \_\_\_\_\_ be granted a leave of absence from the September 1, 2020 Board meeting.

6. **Director's Remarks** \*Director
7. **Other Items** \*Chair  
OPSBA Delegate  
Student Trustee

8. **Trustees' Remarks/Questions** \*Chair  
*Reminder: Trustees who require detailed information on specific questions are encouraged to contact the Director prior to the meeting.*

9. **Chairperson's Remarks** \*Chair

- G. **INFORMATION AND PROPOSALS** \*Chair

1. **Reports from Officials and Staff**
2. **Non-Staff Communications**

Letter to Minister Lecce dated August 24, 2020

**H. FUTURE MEETINGS**

\*Chair

Student Senate Meeting September 14, 2020 5:00 pm

Strategic Planning Committee Meeting Sept 15, 2020 5:00 pm Boardroom

Special Education Advisory Committee Sept 16, 2020 12:00 pm

First Nation Advisory Committee Sept 24, 2020 10:00 am

Board Meeting September 29, 2020 5:00 pm Boardroom

Parent Involvement Committee AGM October 20, 2020 7:00 pm To be determined

**I. ADJOURNMENT**

\*Chair

Motion:

That we do now adjourn at            p.m.

**RAINBOW DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**  
**MINUTES OF THE**  
**REGULAR BOARD MEETING**

held electronically via Google Meet  
and livestreamed from the Ernie Checkeris Boardroom  
at the Centre for Education, 408 Wembley Drive, Sudbury  
on Tuesday, August 18, 2020 at 5:20 p.m.

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Present: Trustees: D. Dewar (Chair), L. Debassige, B. Clement, A. Gibson, J. Hunda, J. Kosmerly, D. Morrison, K. St. Jean, M. Stringer  
Officials: N. Blaseg – Director and Secretary of the Board  
D. Bazinet - Superintendent of Business  
B. Bourget, J. Noble, K. Wachnuk - Superintendents  
N. Charette, H. Thirkill, C. Whitson  
Others: G. Gauthier, T. Hayes, S. Ackroyd, D. Digby, N. Mousseau

Chair Dewar advised that the meeting was being live-streamed and archived.  
Chair Dewar completed roll call to establish who was participating in the Google Meet Board meeting.

**A. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Motion: 20-R72, J.Hunda/D.Morrison

That the agenda for the Regular Board meeting of August 18, 2020 be approved.

Poll vote

*Bob Clement: In-favour*  
*Linda Debassige: In-favour*  
*Doreen Dewar: In-favour*  
*Anita Gibson: In-favour*  
*Judy Hunda: In-favour*  
*Judy Kosmerly: In-favour*  
*Dena Morrison: In-favour*  
*Kerrie St Jean: In-favour*  
*Margaret Stringer: In-favour*

**– Carried**

**B. PRELIMINARY DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST NIL**

**C. PRESENTATION**

Superintendent Noble provided a high level overview of the changes in the Math Curriculum from grade 1 to 8 being implemented in September.

Superintendent Noble addressed the rationale behind the updates, guiding principles, high impact instructional practices, key changes, assessment and evaluation and supports and professional learning resources.

Trustees had the opportunity to ask questions.

**D. REPORT FROM THE IN-CAMERA COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING OF THE BOARD**

No report

**E. OLD BUSINESS**

**1. Previous Minutes**

Motion: 20-R73, J.Kosmerly/D.Morrison

That the minutes of the Regular Board Meeting held on July 15, 2020 be approved.

Poll Vote

*Bob Clement: In-favour*

*Linda Debassige: In-favour*

*Doreen Dewar: In-favour*

*Anita Gibson: In-favour*

*Judy Hunda: In-favour*

*Judy Kosmerly: In-favour*

*Dena Morrison: In-favour*

*Kerrie St Jean: In-favour*

*Margaret Stringer: In-favour*

– **Carried**

**2. Capital Update**

Superintendent Bazinet shared information with trustees regarding the on-going capital projects.

Sandi Ackroyd, Manager of Capital Planning, spoke about individual projects at Chelmsford Valley District Composite School, Lasalle Secondary School, Espanola High School, S. Geiger Public School, Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School, Churchill Public School, Manitoulin Secondary School and the new French Immersion elementary school as well as the dome located on the Lasalle Secondary School site.

Superintendent Bazinet shared information about the Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School revitalization project.

Trustees had the opportunity to ask questions.

**3. Tenders/Requests for Proposals**

Motion: 20-R74, B.Clement/D.Morrison

That the Board award the contract for Broadband Internet Services – RFP 2020-08, as follows:

To Eastlink – 33 locations

To Vianet – 13 locations.

Poll Vote

*Bob Clement: In-favour*

*Linda Debassige: In-favour*  
*Doreen Dewar: In-favour*  
*Anita Gibson: In-favour*  
*Judy Hunda: In-favour*  
*Judy Kosmerly: In-favour*  
*Dena Morrison: In-favour*  
*Kerrie St Jean: In-favour*  
*Margaret Stringer: In-favour*

– Carried

4. **Reports and Recommendations from Board Committees**

a) **2020/2021 Budget**

Motion: 20-R75, J.Hunda/J.Kosmerly

That the Rainbow District School Board 2020/2021 budget be approved.

Poll Vote

*Bob Clement: In-favour*  
*Linda Debassige: In-favour*  
*Doreen Dewar: In-favour*  
*Anita Gibson: Opposed*  
*Judy Hunda: In-favour*  
*Judy Kosmerly: In-favour*  
*Dena Morrison: In-favour*  
*Kerrie St Jean: In-favour*  
*Margaret Stringer: In-favour*

– Carried

b) **September School Reopening**

Director Blaseg provided a detailed update on the fall return to class for Rainbow students, balancing health and safety with student success that met the approval of the Ministry of Education.

Trustees shared their appreciation for the hard work that has been done by staff to secure a safe reopening plan for Rainbow students and staff.

Trustees had the opportunity to ask questions.

Motion 20-R76, M.Stringer/J.Kosmerly

Be it resolved that all students K-12 in Rainbow Schools wear masks at school.

Motion 20-R77, M.Stringer/D.Morrison

That Motion 20-R76 be deferred to the September 1, 2020 Board Meeting.

Poll Vote

*Bob Clement: In-favour*  
*Linda Debassige: Absent*  
*Doreen Dewar: In-favour*  
*Anita Gibson: In-favour*  
*Judy Hunda: In-favour*  
*Judy Kosmerly: In-favour*  
*Dena Morrison: In-favour*  
*Kerrie St Jean: In-favour*

Margaret Stringer: *In-favour*

– **Carried**

Motion 20-R78, M.Stringer/J.Kosmerly

That the Board write a letter to the Minister of Education to advise of our deep concern that its planning for re-opening schools in September does not adequately provide for a safe re-opening as recommended by the Strategic Planning Committee.

Amendment A20-R01, M.Stringer/B.Clement

That Motion 20-R78 be amended by the removal of, “.....does not adequately provide for a safe re-opening as recommended by the Strategic Planning Committee” and the addition of .... “*has placed challenging expectations on Boards in regard to optimal physical distancing in classrooms and on buses, and to request that the Minister provide additional new funding to achieve these expectations*”.

Poll Vote

*Bob Clement: Abstained*

*Linda Debassige: Absent*

*Doreen Dewar: Opposed*

*Anita Gibson: Opposed*

*Judy Hunda: Opposed*

*Judy Kosmerly: Opposed*

*Dena Morrison: Opposed*

*Kerrie St Jean: Opposed*

*Margaret Stringer: In-favour*

– **Defeated**

Amendment A20-R02, M.Stringer/D.Morrison

That Motion 20-R78 be amended by the removal of, “.....does not adequately provide for a safe re-opening as recommended by the Strategic Planning Committee” and the addition of “..... *has placed challenging expectations on Boards in regards to optimal physical distancing in classrooms and on buses*”.

Poll Vote

*Bob Clement: In-favour*

*Linda Debassige: Absent*

*Doreen Dewar: In-favour*

*Anita Gibson: Opposed*

*Judy Hunda: In-favour*

*Judy Kosmerly: In-favour*

*Dena Morrison: In-favour*

*Kerrie St Jean: In-favour*

*Margaret Stringer: In-favour*

– **Carried**

Motion 20-R78, M.Stringer/J.Kosmerly

That the Board write a letter to the Minister of Education to advise of our deep concern that its plan for reopening schools in September has placed challenging expectations on boards in regards to optimal physical distancing in classrooms and on buses.

Poll Vote

*Bob Clement: In-favour*

*Linda Debassige: Absent*  
*Doreen Dewar: In-favour*  
*Anita Gibson: In-favour*  
*Judy Hunda: In-favour*  
*Judy Kosmerly: In-favour*  
*Dena Morrison: In-favour*  
*Kerrie St Jean: In-favour*  
*Margaret Stringer: In-favour*

– **Carried**

**Motion 20-R79, M.Stringer/D.Morrison**

That the Board write a letter to the Minister of Education to urgently request that Rainbow DSB be made a designated Board as recommended by the Strategic Planning Committee.

**Poll Vote**

*Bob Clement: Absent*  
*Linda Debassige: Absent*  
*Doreen Dewar: Opposed*  
*Anita Gibson: Opposed*  
*Judy Hunda: Opposed*  
*Judy Kosmerly: Opposed*  
*Dena Morrison: Opposed*  
*Kerrie St Jean: Opposed*  
*Margaret Stringer: In-favour*

– **Defeated**

**F. NEW BUSINESS**

1. **Requests for Leave of Absence** NIL
2. **Director's Remarks**

Director Blaseg advised that there are currently 230 students registered for the summer Kindergarten camp scheduled for August 24 to 28, 2020 and 72 students registered for the Transition program also scheduled for August 24 to 28, 2020.

**Itinerary**

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| July 16 | Local Coterminous Boards Google Meet<br>Deputy Minister Teleconference with CODE<br>North East Regional Google Meet<br>NSI – Google meet<br>FNAC portfolio meeting |
| July 17 | CODE teleconference<br>RDPC meeting<br>OPC meeting   |
| July 20 | CODE teleconference  |
| July 21 | OPC meeting  |



July 22	Executive Council
July 23	Deputy Minister Teleconference Local Coterminous Boards Google Meet
July 27	CODE teleconference
July 28	Executive Council Assistant Deputy Ministry Teleconference
July 29	FNAC teleconference School Visit – Lasalle Secondary School
July 30	Local Coterminous Boards Google Meet Deputy Minister Teleconference with CODE North East Regional Google Meet Minister of Education teleconference
August 3	Assistant Deputy Minister Teleconference
August 4	Executive Council Agenda Setting Minister of Education Teleconference CODE teleconference
August 5	Aundeck Omni Kaning First Nation Teleconference
August 6	Deputy Minister Teleconference with CODE Local Coterminous Boards Google Meet North East Regional Google Meet
August 10	Executive Council
August 11	Executive Council Strategic Planning Committee Meeting
August 12	Agenda Setting
August 13	Deputy Minister Teleconference with CODE North East Regional Google Meet Wahnapiatae First Nation Teleconference
August 17	FNAC Minister of Education Teleconference CODE teleconference
August 18	Exec Council Board Meeting

3. **Other Items** NIL

4. **Trustees' Remarks/Questions**

**Motion 20-R80, J.Kosmerly/J.Hunda**

That the Board write to the Ministry of Education to express its grave concern that boards use reserve funds to enhance physical distancing and improve air quality.

**Poll Vote**

*Bob Clement: Absent*  
*Linda Debassige: Absent*  
*Doreen Dewar: In-favour*  
*Anita Gibson: in-favour*  
*Judy Hunda: In-favour*  
*Judy Kosmerly: In-favour*  
*Dena Morrison: In-favour*  
*Kerrie St Jean: In-favour*  
*Margaret Stringer: In-favour*

**– Carried unanimously**

5. **Chairperson's Remarks**

Yesterday, I was able to attend another teleconference with the chairs of school boards, Minister Lecce and his staff. I signed in to indicate that I had a question but once again, question period ended before I was recognized. Six different Boards were allowed multiple questions. Concerns included requests for more time, requests for more staff, and requests for more funds. The answers called on Boards to be creative.

So we must never forget the fact that Rainbow District School Board has been mandated to implement the Ontario Ministry of Education's plan to open schools in September. If we were to make our own plan, it might look very different.

In a news item by Sara McCleary published in the Sault newspaper on August 10, she said: "The Ontario government recently announced plans for getting kids back into classrooms next month. The plan has been heavily criticized since, and rightly so, given its many flaws. Nevertheless, I'm going to make a plea to everybody out there on behalf of all of the stressed out parents feeling the same as me: please stop bashing the plan on social media."

Later she goes on to say: "I can only imagine how those parents with no choice but to send their kids feel when they see those posts."

Then she suggests the following: "If they know they have to send their kids, offer them reassurance, help them come up with ideas about how to prepare their kids for school...."

And I would like to add, your school will do everything it possibly can to keep your children – our students – safe. From providing barrels of cleaning products to making use of outdoor spaces and every available indoor space. We all want the same thing and we're willing to work for it.

The saying about needing a village to raise a child has never been truer than NOW. We are very fortunate in that the rate of known cases in Sudbury, Manitoulin Island and Espanola is extremely low.

Our entire community needs to commit to keeping it that way.

Our public health units are poised to assist any way they can, parents and guardians will provide monitoring to ensure their children are healthy before attending school and our staff will protect themselves in order to protect their students.

This is not ideal but then having a world-wide pandemic is so-o-o not ideal.

Thank you and stay safe.

**G. INFORMATION AND PROPOSALS**

1. **Reports from Officials and Staff**
2. **Non-Staff Communications**

**H. FUTURE MEETINGS**

Board Meeting September 1, 2020 5:00 pm

Strategic Planning Committee Meeting September 15, 2020 5:00 pm

**I. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion: 20-R81, D.Morrison/J.Kosmerly

That we now adjourn at 8:20 p.m. – **Carried.**



**Ontario Public School Boards Association**  
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[www.opsba.org](http://www.opsba.org)

Cathy Abraham  
President

W.R. (Rusty) Hick  
Executive Director

**Leading Education's Advocates**

August 18, 2020

TO: Doreen Dewar, Board Chair and Norm Blaseg, Director of Education  
CC: Dennis Bazinet, Superintendent of Business

### RAINBOW DSB

This past year has been a school year like no other, with the COVID-19 pandemic and school closures starting in March, collective bargaining, and of course the opportunities and challenges of working with a government that is now halfway through their mandate.

That's why we've increased our efforts to ensure our multi-year priorities continue to guide the work of the Association as we advocate for outstanding programs, pedagogy and resources as well as a social and educational environment that nurtures the values of universality, inclusion, human rights, respect and kindness. Similar to other jurisdictions throughout the country and the world, we have been and are adjusting to a new normal that includes providing remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. While this transition has been the focus of much of OPSBA's recent work, it does not mean our advocacy has stopped. For example, we recently convened our consultative working groups to meet and discuss important factors and conditions that must be taken into account for a safe return to school. From that, our best advice was relayed to the Ministry of Education in a public submission and we were encouraged to see that most of our concerns were addressed in the government's framework. We will continue to work with our member boards to monitor implementation challenges and concerns and ensure these are shared with the ministry.

As we plan for next year, we will be looking closely at our conferences and events, and seeking to bring in appropriate speakers, have discussions, provide professional development and more to ensure we are doing everything we can to fight all forms of racism. We must also examine our operational activities to see what changes may be necessary, and whether there are additional policy or advocacy positions we can take in support of the fight against racism. We want to find ways to increase the representation of Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) running for Trustee or OPSBA positions, and look to provide the ability for these critical voices to be heard more easily by our Board of Directors, Executive Council and work teams. As an Association, we are also looking to enhance our professional development in this area and to establish more community connections with marginalized groups. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us with your ideas.

As a non-partisan organization, we have a 32-year history of building positive and mutually respectful working relationships with politicians and staff from all parties represented in the Ontario Legislature. These relationships allow us to successfully represent the voice of our members on the many issues that affect our students and communities.

Minister of Education Stephen Lecce attended our Public Education Symposium (PES) in January and also addressed our Board of Directors in September 2019 and May 2020. Our second Advocacy Day at Queen's Park in November brought more than 50 public school board trustees and student trustees to Toronto to meet with MPPs and political staff, reinforcing OPSBA's advocacy position on key issues, such as the importance of investment in public education, Indigenous Education, curriculum, mental health supports and the value of democratic, locally elected trustees. The day began with a news conference that released the results of [polling and research](#) done in partnership with Nanos Research. This type of work has been reinforced by our Board of Directors, who directed the Association to plan more strategic government relations and public affairs activities.

OPSBA represents over 1.3 million students, or nearly 70% of the entire K-12 student population, including all 31 English public school boards as well as 10 school authorities. Collectively, this makes our organization the number one stakeholder voice for education in Ontario. Your school board is clearly a very big part of who we are and what we do. We advocate for public education every day, and the government knows that we have the weight of all of our members behind us.

Our experienced [Labour Relations](#) team successfully concluded and ratified central agreements with all education bargaining units. We are fortunate to have strong staff with outstanding expertise and credibility working to ensure student achievement and well-being are at forefront of all discussions and decisions. School boards continue to work toward implementation with the support of OPSBA Labour Relations staff.

While much of the advocacy work can be seen in our public submissions and meetings with key stakeholders, there is a great amount of day-to-day work that is done behind the scenes. OPSBA staff have direct and constant access to both the bureaucracy and political staff in the government as well as in the opposition parties. These relationships allow for conversations and the sharing of information to further support our common priorities.

OPSBA continues to be represented on a number of key government working tables and our work has resulted in a number of successful outcomes. Here are some additional highlights:

- ***Legislative Submissions and Government Consultations*** -- OPSBA has engaged in a wide range of advocacy work related to the provincial government's legislative and regulatory agenda, including [submissions and letters](#) regarding:
  - [Ontario's Plan to Reopen Schools](#)
  - [2020-21 Education Funding](#)
  - [Bullying in schools and anti-bullying initiatives](#)
  - [Northern Ontario concerns](#)
  - [Education Development Charges](#)
- ***Mental Health and Well-Being*** – OPSBA continues in its role as a founding member of the [Ontario Coalition for Children and Youth Mental Health](#). OPSBA and the Coalition's advocacy has led to the maintenance of mental health investments in the public education system for 2020-21 and beyond.
- ***Indigenous Education*** – OPSBA's [Indigenous Trustees' Council](#) continues to support the educational needs of Indigenous students, and to ensure all students are educated about the history and culture of Indigenous peoples. OPSBA continues to be a leading advocate in education in this area.

- **The Role of Trustee** – OPSBA updated a [series of resources](#) to support trustees and school boards for Local Government Week 2019. We also worked with OSTA-AECO to promote and award two new scholarships for graduates – the [Ontario Public Student Trustee Scholarship](#) and the [Public Property Assessment Network Scholarship](#). In addition, as part of OESC, we have shared and promoted the new and revised [Trustee Professional Development Program](#), which now includes a Certificate of Completion.
- **French as a Second Language** – OPSBA continues to lead a three-year Ontario Labour Market Partnership project with the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development entitled [Meeting Labour Market Needs for French as a Second Language Instruction in Ontario](#).

**Our programs and services are highly cost effective.** The financial benefits of membership far exceed not only the membership fee itself, but the outcomes that could be achieved by boards acting individually. Our collective voice is a strong one. Working with our partners at the [OESC](#), our interventions on copyright tariffs, natural gas rates and electricity rates have continued to create significant savings for all school boards and cover membership fees many times over. When this is combined with the other benefits created through our coordination and advocacy, the real value of board membership is clear.

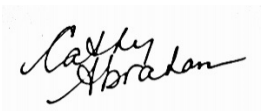
Examples of 2019-20 savings realized for:	
RAINBOW DSB	
<b>Savings in Copyright Fees: \$ 31,030</b>	<b>Savings in Energy Costs: \$ 200,100</b>

*Please note:* For the third year in a row, the OPSBA Board of Directors has approved a 0% increase for total membership fees. We have therefore kept the total membership fee (31 school boards and 10 school authorities combined) the same for four consecutive years. There may however be a slight change, up or down, to your individual board membership fee based on the fee model which is composed of a base amount and a percentage of your Board Administration and Governance Grant.

The 2020-21 OPSBA membership fee for your board is \$ 39,294.

Thank you for your continued support as a member of OPSBA and for your dedication to public education. You can learn more about the valuable services OPSBA offers your board by visiting [www.opsba.org](http://www.opsba.org).

Sincerely,



Cathy Abraham  
President



W.R. (Rusty) Hick  
Executive Director

*Attachment: Invoice for the 2020-21 OPSBA membership fee*



**ONTARIO PUBLIC  
SCHOOL BOARDS'  
ASSOCIATION**

**Leading Education's Advocates**

**Ontario Public School Boards' Association**

439 University Avenue, 18th Floor

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[webmaster@opsba.org](mailto:webmaster@opsba.org)

[www.opsba.org](http://www.opsba.org)

Invoice to:	<b>Rainbow District School Board</b> 408 Wembley Drive Sudbury, ON P3E 1P2		
Invoice# 030-20/21	Date: September 01, 2020	HST #10780 0344 RT 0001	
QTY	DESCRIPTION		AMOUNT
	<p align="center"><b>2020-2021 Membership Fee</b> <b>September 01, 2020 to August 31, 2021</b></p> <p>* Final Billing</p>		\$39,294.00
Please make cheque payable to:		Subtotal	\$39,294.00
<b>Ontario Public School Boards' Association</b>		HST @ 13%	\$5,108.22
Terms of Payment : Due upon receipt		<b>Total</b>	<b>\$44,402.22</b>

Copy 1 - Customer

Copy 2 - Accounting

Copy 3 - File



# 2020 AGM

**The OPSBA Annual General Meeting, usually held in June, was deferred and has now been scheduled for Saturday, September 26, 2020, via video conference. Thank you for your understanding.**

## Important Material for the OPSBA AGM

[OPSBA Candidates' Election Guide](#)

[Roles and Responsibilities](#)

[Nomination Form for OPSBA Elected Positions 2020](#)

[OPSBA Election Nomination Forms Received as of August 25, 2020](#)

[Policy Resolution Submission Form and Guidelines](#)

[Proposed Amendment to the Constitution Submission Form](#)

For more information:

Jane Hayes, Executive Coordinator, 416-340-2540

or Email the [Webmaster](#)





408 Wembley Drive, Sudbury, Ontario P3E 1P2 | Tel: 705.674.3171 | Toll Free: 1.888.421.2661 | [rainbowschools.ca](http://rainbowschools.ca)

August 24, 2020

Honourable Stephen Lecce  
Minister of Education  
Mowat Block,  
900 Bay Street  
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Lecce:

At its regular meeting on August 18, 2020, Rainbow District School Board trustees approved the following motions regarding the Ministry's plan for reopening schools:

Motion 20-R78 Margaret Stringer/Judy Kosmerly

*That the Board write a letter to the Minister of Education to advise of our deep concern that its plan for the reopening of schools in September has placed challenging expectations on boards in regards to optimal physical distancing in classrooms and on buses. Carried unanimously*

Motion 20-R80 Judy Kosmerly/Judy Hunda

*That the Board write to the Ministry of Education to express its grave concern that boards use reserve funds to enhance physical distancing and improve air quality. Carried unanimously*

The health, safety and well-being of our students and staff remains the first and foremost priority as Rainbow District School Board prepares to welcome students back to class for the 2020-2021 school year.

We want our parents/guardians to send their children to school with confidence, knowing that they will be learning in a safe and caring environment. We also want our educators and support staff to return to school with confidence, knowing that they will be working in a safe and caring environment.

To achieve this goal, we have implemented a number of health and safety protocols that, together, provide layers of protection to limit the spread of COVID-19. Physical distancing will be difficult to achieve given that we have been directed to reopen schools with full in class instruction, 300 minutes per day, five days a week. In most Rainbow District School Board schools, ensuring physical distancing would require double the number of classrooms and double the number of teachers.

On August 13, 2020, you announced that you were allowing school boards to use their reserves to enhance physical distancing and improve air quality. At first glance, the "unlocking" of \$500 million in funds province-wide seemed like a good news story. Using reserves to respond to COVID-19, however, is not only imprudent, it provides a false sense of hope in a time of great uncertainty.

Boards have accumulated reserves through careful budget management. These funds are set aside to cover unanticipated expenses and shortfalls at year end. They are also earmarked for high priority initiatives, at the local level, with a focus on student achievement and well-being. These local priority initiatives are not funded by the province.

Over the past decade, Rainbow District School Board has experienced significant funding reductions due to declining enrolment. We have also been impacted by the Ministry's School Board Efficiencies and Modernization Strategy which resulted in a cumulative loss of revenue. In order to balance its

budget, Rainbow District School Board was forced to draw from its modest reserves over multiple years.

As we prepare for the 2020-2021 school year, we face a number of uncertainties. We don't have actual enrolment, which drives the Grants for Student Needs or GSNs. We don't know if the extra funds made available by the Province to date to support the safe reopening of schools will be sufficient to cover the costs for the duration of the pandemic. We don't know if we will have unexpected expenditures mid-year.

As you have said many times, Minister Lecce, we are living in unprecedented times. There is just so much that we don't know about the coming school year because we have never experienced this before. With this uncertainty, the financial risk on our board is greater than ever. What we do know is that we will still be expected to balance our budget at year end.

By announcing the "unlocking" of school board reserves, the Province of Ontario has essentially downloaded its financial obligations for health and safety to school boards. While it may have made for good news headlines at the time, it was a clear abdication of responsibility.

Doing this has put all boards in an untenable position. If a board uses its reserves, less funds will be available in the short and long term to manage financial risk or support board initiatives. If a board doesn't use its reserves, it may be perceived by the public as not doing enough to support the health and safety of students and staff.

Rainbow District School Board, and indeed all school boards in Ontario, must push responsibility back to the Province to provide equitable funding for health and safety, including enhanced physical distancing in classrooms and on school buses, and improved air quality.

Rainbow District School Board applauds the Ontario Public School Boards' Association for voicing its concerns on behalf of school boards. It's now our turn to speak up and respectfully request that the Province provide additional new funding to school boards to respond to the unprecedented challenges of COVID-19.

Sincerely,



Doreen Dewar  
Chair

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